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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the need for new programing strategies for seriously emotionally disturbed children, describes the ecological or systems orientation approach, cites instances in Scandinavian ecological approaches, and considers applications to the United States. The ecological approach is described in terms of nine principles, including that the target child is seldom, if ever, the whole problem; that understanding and responding to needs and concerns of significant others in the child's environment are critical; and that coordination of the many people and agencies involved is the key. Examples of the ecological approach used in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden are detailed, and differences between the Scandinavian and United States culture are noted. The appearance in the United States of the systems oriented resource teacher is described, and the role is explained. The paper concludes with a summary of the systems oriented resource teacher training program at Syracuse University. An ecological profile of a behaviorally disordered elementary school student is given to illustrate the approach. (CL)

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International Perspectives on Ecological Approaches to Seriously Emotionally Disturbed Children: Toward the Development of a Systems-Oriented Resource Teacher Model

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

"For the past few years, the most commonly used estimate is that at any one time, 10 percent of the population need some form of mental health care...There is new evidence that this figure may be closer to 15 percent of the population." (p.8)

"According to the best recent estimates, 8.1 million of the 54 million children and youth of school age, or 15 percent of that population, need help for psychological disorders...One of every three thousand children has an autistic disorder. There are 200,000 cases of child abuse reported every year, and surveys indicate the total number may be at least 10 times greater. Adolescents show an alarming increase in suicide, depression, and alcohol and drug misuse." (p.8)

(Excerpts from the Preliminary Report to the President from the President's Commission on Mental Health, September 1, 1977)

The number of youngsters believed to be emotionally disturbed (according to the recent report of the President's Commission) continues to increase. Recent New York State estimates indicate that approximately 33,634 students served in public, private, or state supported schools in 1978-79 were emotionally disturbed. For 1979-80, it was estimated that over 3,500 new teachers of children labeled Emotionally Disturbed would be needed to meet the full service goals for seriously (not mildly and moderately) disturbed children.

According to the October, 1979 issue of the CCBD Newsletter, the BEH definition for seriously emotionally disturbed children is as follows:

"The term means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree, which adversely affects educational performance:

(A) An inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors:
(B) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers;
(C) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances;
(D) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or
(E) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.
(ii) The term includes children who are schizophrenic or autistic. The term does not include children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they are seriously emotionally disturbed."

"Using this definition, the Bureau estimated very conservatively that approximately 2% of children and youth ages 3-21 would require special education because of their emotional disturbance...

"...The current estimate of school age population (5-17) is 51,317,000. Using the conservative figure of 2% of the school-aged population as having a serious emotional disturbance so as to require special education, then 1,026,340 of these children and youth would need this special education. Data from the Part B, EHA state plans and from P.L. 89-313 programs indicate there are 284,645 seriously emotionally disturbed children and youth who are receiving a special education. This means there are about 741,000 seriously emotionally disturbed children not now receiving special education." (p.2)

A recent comprehensive report (Challenges for Children's Mental Health Services, MITRE Corporation, 1977) that focused on issues in the delivery of appropriate services to troubled children in America offers further data for consideration. That report, based on an extensive Delphi survey process with a national sample of experts in the area of Children's Mental Health identified the following 10 "barriers" to the provision of appropriate services (including special education).

1. Services not tailored to the needs of individuals.
2. Poor working relationships among service providers and agencies.
3. Decision-makers do not perceive the need for services.
4. Inappropriate input to planning for services.
5. Prohibitive cost of mental health services.
6. Political/social resistance to change.
7. Lack of ability to reach potential clients.
8. Medical model impedes provision of preventive services.
9. Lack of definition of mental health.
10. Services dehumanize and frustrate clients.

Even a quick glance at the identified barriers indicates the emphasis placed on the systems that surround troubled children. Though all of us know the difficulties and frustrations of efforts with seriously disturbed youngsters, it's interesting to note that direct service concerns don't even enter into the Top 10 Barriers List! Instead, the list of obstacles really serves to highlight the need for what has become known as an ecological or systems-oriented basis for programming efforts for seriously troubled children.

The purposes of this paper are to:

1. Briefly discuss the need for new kinds of programming strategies for seriously troubled children.
2. Outline the major elements and provide some examples of the Ecological or Systems-Orientation to programs for troubled youngsters.
3. Examine some relevant implications of European (especially Scandinavian) programs based on the ecological model, and
4. Consider the possibilities for a developing model for a systems-orientation to resource teaching here in America.

The situation for disturbed children is at an especially critical stage right now. Efforts to provide appropriate educational programs for emotionally disturbed children, like efforts with other groups of handicapped youngsters, have been changing dramatically over the past few years. Public Law 94-142 and the implications of its entry into program development efforts in local districts are combining to create a variety of new alternatives for the education of troubled children. The effects have been essentially two-fold; we are beginning to see more seriously disturbed children in public school settings and we are also seeing the rapid development of new models for the delivery of services to such youngsters.

Unfortunately, in the rush to provide service to more youngsters, many of the models being utilized for educational programs for disturbed children are failing to make use of the experience of earlier programs targeted at this population. For example, though a number of psycho-educational programs have documented the importance of a family orientation to work with disturbed children, great numbers of self-contained classroom teachers, resource teachers, consulting teachers, etc. are prevented from working with families because of the specific demands of particular job descriptions. More generally, despite the strong movement in recent years towards an "ecological" viewpoint that stresses the perspective of emotional disturbance as a mismatch between individual and environment and emphasizes the importance of working with the "whole child," many teachers of troubled children are not allowed to take even one step outside the more limited direct-service-only model developed in an earlier time. This raises a problem that may be defined by the need to develop new models of school-based service delivery (to children labeled emotionally disturbed/behaviorally disordered) that are: more consistent with previous efforts to achieve change with troubled children, more oriented toward the developing ecological viewpoint, and more practically implementable in public schools today. While this paper focuses on the development of a "systems"-oriented model for the Resource Teacher's role with disturbed children, comparable efforts must also be aimed at developing more effective models for the variety of other-teacher roles (self-contained classroom teachers, regular classroom teachers involved in mainstreaming, consulting teachers, etc.) involved in the education of seriously emotionally disturbed children.

Ecological Systems Approach and Emotional Disturbance

While all of the major models utilized in work with troubled children (psychodynamic, behavioral, biophysical, and sociological) agree that internal and external forces operate together to produce human behavior, they differ significantly in emphasis. Both the psychodynamic and the biophysical models are concerned for the most part with the definition and understanding of internal forces. Psychodynamic theorists focus primarily on "needs" and "drives" while biophysical theorists emphasize physiological conditions which may lead to certain typical behavior patterns.

The behavioral and sociological models on the contrary are concerned mainly with external forces. The behavior theorists work to understand the stimulus-response patterns, and describe the reinforcing and punishing conditions in the environment which produce particular patterns of behavior. Sociologists are more concerned with the wider environment (including institutions, communities, culture, and society) in their efforts to understand forces which can produce particular behaviors by individuals and groups of individuals.

More recently, ecological theory has been utilized as a way to understand emotional disturbance that is conceptually broader than the more traditional models described above. Contrary to the narrower models, ecologists insist that both internal and external forces must be acknowledged and further, that it is the interaction between them which always accounts for behavior.

Following are some of the major assumptions made by persons who develop intervention programs for disturbed children based upon ecological principles.

1. Each child is an inseparable part of a small social system.

2. Disturbance is not viewed as a disease located within the body of the child, but rather as discordance (a lack of balance) in the system.

3. Discordance may be defined as a disparity between an individual's abilities and the demands or expectations of the environment - a "failure to match" between child and system.

4. The goal of any intervention is to make the system work; and to make it work, ultimately. without the intervention.

5. Improvement in any part of the system can benefit the entire system.

6. This broader view of disturbances gives rise to three major areas for intervention:

   a) changing the child

   b) changing the environment

   c) changing attitudes and expectations

As Morse, Smith and Acker (1977) state, the general goal of an ecological intervention is not a particular state of mental health, nor a particular set of behavior patterns but rather, an increased concordance between the behavior of the child and the setting in which he resides. Since it is generally recognized that there are no pure ecological intervention techniques currently in use, most intervention programs attempt to utilize methods developed from other theoretical models but in an ecological manner.

In all cases, ecological interventions have the common goal of adapting the fit between behavior and setting. The specific procedures used, however, may be drastically different, depending on:

1. Whether the intervention is aimed at changing the child, changing the perception of the child's behavior.

2. the particular point of view of the ecological interveners; do their techniques stem for psychodynamic, behavioral, biophysical or sociological theory?

Though Feagans (1972) accurately discussed the lack of a formalized ecological theory of emotional disturbance, there have been some efforts to apply what we know about ecological theory to the problems presented by emotional disturbance in children. Some of the most important work in this area has been done by William Rhodes, who as early as 1967 suggested that special educators had borrowed a physiological model and applied it to emotional disturbance. Thus, educators had come to view disturbance as residing totally and completely within the child, and interventions were based on finding and correcting neurological, chemical, genetic, and/or psychological flaws within identified youngsters. Rhodes proposed an alternative view of emotional disturbance, an ecological perspective that emphasized the reciprocal nature of

the disturbance phenomenon and focused on the interchange between a child and the environment as the locus of disturbance. Without denying the importance of intrapsychic, behavioral, or biophysical analyses of human behavior, Rhodes suggested that ecological theory, by recognizing the contact between child and community as the point of disturbance, supplied a more comprehensive perspective and a more functional basis for developing appropriate interventions.

Others, including Swap (1974, 1978), Apter (1977), Kounin (1970, 1975), Hobbs (1966, 1975), etc. have discussed work in this area, and a number of successful intervention programs based on the developing ecological understanding of emotional disturbance have been described. In the next section, two examples of ecologically-based programs with specific relevance to our current concerns will be described.

Project Re-Education

Perhaps the best known example of an ecological orientation to a program for disturbed youngsters may be found in Project Re-Education developed by Nick Hobbs and his colleagues. Designed for children having serious difficulty in school, Project Re-Ed began with the residential school program (but only during the week - youngsters always went home on weekends). The intent of the program was to prevent hospitalization by providing both a temporary buffer between home and school as well as a rest from the stress and anxiety of each child's current situation.

At the school, teacher-counselors helped youngsters with the usual learning tasks, but also, equally importantly, with learning what was necessary for successful re-entry into their home systems. As youngsters progressed, the liaison teachers (a new role for educators developed in the Re-Ed project) helped youngsters and the significant others in their systems prepare for re-entry. Liaison teachers continued their coordinating and mediating efforts through the youngsters return to home and to the home school and beyond (in an effort to maintain the necessary level of intervention until a youngster's system could work successfully on its own again).

The Re-Ed model proved successful in reaching its goal of making small social systems work by finding new ways to involve home, school, neighborhood, and community. It has been replicated and adopted, in whole or in part, at a number of additional sites and stands perhaps as the most comprehensive, best documented example of ecological intervention with troubled youngsters and their systems.

BRIDGE Program Family Advocate

Another example of an ecological intervention with emotionally troubled children may be seen in the role of Family Advocate, developed in the BRIDGE Program, a comprehensive psycho-educational program for troubled children and families. In their effort to meet the needs of a variety of youngsters within the context of each of their systems, Family Advocates:

1) Tried to teach problem-solving skills by working with families to identify the source of current difficulties, develop plans with realistic possibilities for success, and follow through to a positive resolution.

2) Supervised all other program staff working with, for or on behalf of any family merber.

3) Always focused on the coordination of services as an important task. Often advocates were able to serve as "links" binding the many and varied agencies that impinge on the lives of children and families labeled emotionally disturbed into a strong and effective chain.

4) Were always involved in both direct and indirect service functions.

By attending to the critical elements listed above and by working from an ecological perspective, Family Advocates were able to bring effective and efficient service to a number of very troubled children and families. In the model developed by the BRIDGE Program (Apter, et.al., 1979), it was not at all unusual for an advocate to serve eight to ten such families effectively in a quarter time (lo hours a week) position. The results of a comprehensive program evaluation have documented the effectiveness of the Family Advocacy Model.

Implications of an Ecological Systems Perspective

1) On the whole, we must realize that the traditional programs for children with emotional difficulties have not been successful in reducing the numbers or severity of emotional disturbance in children. The ecological orientation proposes that this failure may be due to the narrowness of previous efforts.

2) A systems viewpoint seems to be essential in examining the problem we call emotional disturbance. Even in the case of severely troubled younsters, it seems clear from a reading of the current literature that the targeted child is seldom, if ever, the whole problem.

3) Lobbs (1975) has clearly documented the inadequacy of our current categorization system and the limited diagnosis-intervention child-only focus on which it is based. In order to be effective, diagnosis and treatment of troubled children must be more comprehensive and functional than it has been in the past. It seems clear that we can benefit by gathering data from as many sources as possible; that is, we need to be inclusive instead of exclusive in what information we utilize in our thinking about the youngsters we attempt to serve. New eoological assessment strategies like ecological mapping, profile systems, comprehensive case reports,etc. may represent important additions to our understanding of troubled children.

4) Everyone has needs and we must pay attention to them. The ecological orientation stresses the importance of looking at the entire system surrounding each child. Our own experiences and the documentation of efforts by many other indicates the importance of understanding and responding to the needs and concerns of significant others (parents, teachers, friends, etc.) in each child's environment.

5) Coordination is the key. The efforts of people like the Liaison Teacher developed in Project Re-Education, or the Family Advocate developed by the people in the BRIDGE Program, are examples of the newly developing need to focus on a critical aspect of work with troubled children; the coordination of the many people concerned.

6) Building strong eco-systems should be the ultimate goal of intervention with troubled children. Linkages between various aspects of each child's world are seen as critical elements (not 'fringe extras' to be considered if time allows) in the development of successful programs.

7) Ecological interventions can use numerous resources ignored by other approaches. Children live and learn within the context of their own environments. Parents, siblings, neighborhood peer groups, church, school, playground are 11 potential elements of a particular child's world. Each element has an impact the child and, through the child on each other; a youngster's difficulty in one part of his/her system (i.e., home) can have serious repercussions in another part (i.e., school). Concern is with the whole child.

8) Ecological interventions can have a broad positive impact benefitting others as well as the 'target' child. The implications of an ecological perspective for the prevention of emotional disturbances are enormous.

9) Educators of troubled children must accept responsibility for alleviating conditions that have created troubled children in the past. For example, Hobbs (1975) discussed turnstile children whose case histories are filled with neglect, abuse, school problems, run-ins with the law, and recommendations for treatment, placement, and education that never care about. The lack of coordination of services for these children results in their continual deterioration, and it is imperative that special educators define their jobs in ways that will allow them to fill these unmet needs.

Both program models for disturbed children and the preparation of teachers to work with such youngsters must change to reflect the ecological systems model. There are a number of ways in which this might happen. First, the curriculum for teacher training could be modified to include instruction in the development, implementation, and management of ecosystems, Second, there should be, as Hobbs (1975) has suggested, experimental training programs for new kinds of roles (liaison teacher-counselor, child advocate, etc.). Third, and most relevant to our concerns here, there needs to be appropriate redevelopment efforts aimed at existing program models and roles (i.e., Resource Teacher). If educators believe that disturbance resides in the interaction between people at a particular point in time, then, then training must prepare teachers to operate on this systems level, and service delivery models must enable teachers and other professionals to build their programs on this basis.

Before moving onto the consideration model (the Systems-Oriented Resource Teacher) of ecologically-based service delivery, let's pause to consider some outstanding facets of Scandinavian approaches to troubled children.

International Perspectives

During the spring and summer of 1979, I was able to travel extensively in Western Europe, Great Britian and Scandinavia. During the periods of time I spent in Scandinavia, I visited a number of settings that provide services to, or train staff to work with, youngsters with special emotional and/or behavioral needs.

In addition to my person-to-person visits in Scandinavia I was also able to both converse with a number of people on the phone, as well as to collect voluminous written materials about human service programs and policies. Finally, my travels in Denmark, Norway and Sweden provided opportunities to see first-hand (from the tourists' viewpoint) many of the ecological aspects of Scandinavian life.

In Scandinavia, one finds many examples of cooperative efforts between government agencies, schools, voluntary organizations, and the business community on behalf of troubled children and youth. Two areas in which this sort of cooperation has demonstrated very positive results are 1) vocational training/employment and 2) housing.

In Denmark, for example, the National Society for Housing for the Young manages several thousand apartments and rooms for three types of clients:

1) Young people with normal problems of adolescence who need to live apart from their parents but also need supervision.

2) Rural youth who are experiencing difficulties adjusting to the pressures of urban life.

3) Adolescents with physical, mental, and emotional handicaps who are in need of a protected environment.

Social workers are assigned to each of the young people living in these arrangements and provide guidance and counseling as appropriate. In some of the housing projects, "children's pensions" for younger children who need protected care due to parental inability to provide for them, may also be found.

In Scandinavia one also finds both a greater acceptance of persons with a variety of handicapping conditions than one does in the United States as well as a much stronger sense of public and governmental responsibility for their welfare. There is a better coordination of social, medical and educational services, and as a result, disabled people are more visible in Scandinavia and have more access to society's services.

Juul (1978) has noted that both in terms of salary and social status, European teachers are higher on the ladder than their American counterparts. They tend to be older, more experienced and better educated, and they are more secure in their professional identity and in their relations with the other professions. Working conditions are good; optimism, concern and cheerfulness prevails, the school day is short, classes are small, the learning environment is usually spacious and attractive, the teachers lounge often resembles a very comfortable and attractive living room, instructional materials are in good supply, etc. Perhaps as a result, attitudes toward troubled children may be more positive and teachers tend to stay with thir jobs longer. Certainly, there are implications here for the lives of seriously disturbed children.

Following are some especially relevant features of Scandinavian models based on my recent study.

Denmark

Item: The "Social Assistance Act" of June 19, 1974 (effective as of April 1, 1976) was created in an effort to simplify the social service systems operations. The act is highlighted by the 'one-string-system,' an innovation which enables a citizen with a social problem of any kind, to apply to one place (the local Social/Health Administration) for assistance. Clear and understandable guidance and counseling services, both in system offices and in client's homes have become an essential element of this system. When necessary, a case worker familiar to the family and knowledgeable about the local community becomes a client's contact person. It is even possible for such contact persons to spend part of their professional time in other system's facilities (i.e., medical centers, schools treatment institutions, etc.) in an effort to help coordinate services to a client.

The 'one-string-system' is also believed to have preventive benefits. If the guidance and consultation service is active and accepted by local communities, the hope is that successful interventions can be started earlier for families with special needs. When appropriate, this can take the form of the assignment of a 'personal advisor' to even very young children. Such an advisor might continue to work with a youngster well through the teen-age years.

Item: During the past 20 years, there has been a dramatic decrease in the number of residential institution slots for children and youth (from 350 institutions with 10,000 places to 265 with 6,500 places).

Item: During the International Year of the Child, the Danish Association of School Psychologists (DASP) was particularly active in the Psychological Rights Project of International School Psychology Association. DASP members developed and distributed 20,000 copies of a booklet focused on Children's Psychological Rights to general medical practitioners, schools, children's dentists, welfare offices, etc. In addition, the Danish Ministry of Education supported a special issue of the DASP Journal (School Psychology) devoted to the topics of Children's Psychological Rights.

Item: From 1965-1975, Denmark implemented a National Family Support System program directed at improving family functioning. From its onset, the program was sensitive to stigmatization and was designed with an emphasis on voluntary participation, prevention, and early intervention. The program was idealistic, yet pragmatic; recognizing peoples' greater responsiveness in time of crisis, and accepting the reality that contact in the home and from a local neighborhood base overcomes much resistance and is also cost-effective.

The multiple problems of so many families dramatized the need for coordination of services. In the Danish Program, Neighborhood Family Centers were created to provide "family directed supportive activities" for groups of 70 families. Activities included home visiting for guidance, especially coordination of dealings with other public agencies and assistance in solving most pressing problems.

Since most families were "in crisis" when they contacted the program, it was important that the system be able to respond quickly. In most instances, families were seen on the day they applied for assistance and help for most pressing problems was provided immediately. Referrals could also be made to local neighborhood family advisors who would become contact people for the families.

The family helper usually spent from 6 months to 1 year working with a family, and the case was closed when it was felt the family situation had stabilized. Every attempt was made to help each family develop the ability to care for itself as soon as possible and to prevent the use of the program as a crutch. The family, however, could return at any time for further help if it was necessary. Each week the family advisor usually spent about 3 1/2 days in his neighborhood making home visits and contacting other agencies or individuals and 1 1/2 days at the central office with other members of the team.

The family Guidance program had a profound effect on human services in Denmark. The three essential elements of this program were incorporated into the massive social system reform legislation: [A voluntary family-centered approach that does not require pre-determined categories for assistance, the coordination of all services by one worker, and a neighborhood approach that places services where people live.]

Norway

Item: Many junior high high schools employ "social teachers" who work with 'maladjusted' children in school and visit homes to involve parents. Referrals for more extensive help are more centralized and require considerable coordination of local and national education and mental health systems.

Item: Residential programs are characterized by the newness and home-like conditions of their buildings, the very impressive staff-student (1 teacher for every 2 or 3 students) ratio, and the seemingly inexhaustible supplies. Often, there is valuable liaison work conducted between teachers and other professionals, even within the residential program classrooms.

Item: Even in hospital-based centers, individual psychotherapy takes a back seat to the very comprehensive milieu therapy approach. All staff members involve themselves in the total life of the program and try to make daily routines as normal and as therapeutic as possible for the youngsters.

Item: Though the first school psychological services were not established until after World War II, such services grew rapidly and there is now a plentiful supply of professional psychologists providing much-needed support to the schools on a regular basis. The aim is to have one psychologist for every 3,000 pupils and in some parts of the country, that ratio has already been achieved. More importantly, the emphasis of the School Psychology Program has been on modifying home and school environments rather than on individual treatment.

Item: The Sogn School, on the outskirts of Oslo was established in 1962 as the educational component of the Adolescent Clinic at the Norwegian National Center of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. The program was recently shifted to a more family-centered focus and there are several comfortable apartments at the school utilized both for parents' visits and for live-in family therapy programs.

Recognition of the importance of each child's life outside of the institution and of the potentially negative consequences of hospitalization and separation from home has lead to a number of program changes. Long-term residential care has been reduced; more students stay for shorter periods or participate in the day program. Staff time and energies are utilized much more for pre and post-care, family counseling, consultations with schools and community agencies, coordination, etc.

Cooperation between medical and educational components at the center is close and cordial; based on respect for the importance of all program components and staff roles. Treatment goals are often formulated in contracts in an effort to encourage families and youngsters to share responsiblility for progress with professionals.

Item: At the Health Sports Center in Beitostolen, groups of disabled youngsters and adults participate in short-term comprehensive fitness programs under the direction of a diverse and very qualified staff. Follow-up efforts are expedited by coordination with clients; local sports clubs, a typical feature of Norwegian society. Through such coordination, disabled youngsters (many of whom could be seen as seriously emotionally distressed) have increased opportunities to develop social relationships and to participate in organized recreational activities.

Sweden

Item: Sweden's schools have demonstrated their committment to a "mainstreaming" philosophy. As early as 1970, 20% of children in Swedish basic school (first 9 years) received special education - about 15% in regular classrooms with supporting services, 4% in special classes, and less than 1% in special schools.

Item: The concept of a remedial class is not found in the proposal for changes in the curriculum of the ocmprehensive school. Neither is remedial teaching regarded as a special form of teaching, nor discussed under separate headings. Instead, programs are planned jointly by teachers and pupils to insure that each pupil can be involved in the school work both individually and in groups together with other children.

Item: At the same time another form of coordinated remedial teaching has developed, so-called co-education. This means that a remedial teacher takes part in the teaching in the same room as the class-teacher. The remedial teacher often takes charge of one or more pupils in need of special support. But the remedial teacher can also cooperate in such a way that the class-teacher can devote more time to these particular pupils. Co-education may be defined therefore as a true partnership between two teachers rather than special measures for just the pupils in need of support.

Item: Another preventive measure is the acclimatization period at the beginning of the autumn term in grades 1, 4 and 7, i.e., on the transition from pre-school to comprehensive compulsory school and the transition between the different levels of the comprehensive compulsory school. The children are taught in smaller groups at this time. The teacher tries to get to know each individual child and to discover any difficulties or peculiarities the child might have. Communication between the new and old teacher, between teachers and parents, school nurse, psychologist, etc. are of great importance in this work.

Item: There is also a joint organization, the Central Committee of the Organizations of the Handicapped, serving 17 of the national associations for the physically, mentally, and emotionally handicapped, with a total membership of close to 200,000. Corresponding joint bodies exist in all the counties and in many cities, a total of almost 50. These collaborative bodies serve all represented groups of handicapped persons in areas of common interest, organize joint meetings and take joint action when circumstances make this feasible.

Item: Social policy attempts to both help parents find employment and also to provide adequate child care facilities. Parents are also entitled to a total of seven months "child leave" with 90% of their regular income and fathers share with mothers, the right to take 12 days per year off from work in order to stay home with sick children.

Item: Almost all (99% of 1-year olds, 67% of other pre-school age youngsters) pre-school children undergo standard regular health check-ups, though this is increasingly becoming a centralized clinic-based service. Over the past 40-50 years, such examinations have revealed a move from somatic problems (physical growth issues, nutritional deficiencies, repeated infections, etc.) to more mental hygiene issues. Accordingly, mental health has demanded and received a correspondingly larger portion of the child health care system's needs.

Item: Important information is reported to child welfare clinics soon after birth and before the nurse's first house call to the family (no later than 14 days after the newborn child is brought home). The medical program is based on active preventive care and early intervention for specific special needs.

Item: Of special interest in the Swedish child health services is the general examination program for four year-olds, initiated a few years ago. Sweden now has a pediatric care system in which all children undergo a longitudinal, regularly recurring series of health examinations, with the most detailed check-ups in early infancy, at the age of four, and finally at age seven when children begin compulsory schooling. The basic physical examination of newborn infants has also made it possible to create a system of special-target check-ups of so-called high-risk children.

Item: With regard to Children's Policy in Sweden, efforts are continually made to estimate the effects of change in other sectors of society on children's future environments. One overall conclusion drawn by the Commission on Children's Policy is that it is not possible to create a good living environment for children without creating a good society for all. Recognition is clearly given to the fact that reforms aimed at improving living conditions for children can not be directed towards children only.

Item: It is expected that municipal and county councils will establish a system for special supervision of children's interest throughout the political process by appointing an official to focus on children questions.

Item: Considerable thought has gone into efforts to coordinate school and the world of work. Teachers as well as students are afforded opportunities to visit a variety of work places for up to four weeks per year. Extensive cooperation has been achieved between schools, Employment Services, employers and trade unions.

Item: The 1976 Parliament decision to give the communities a block grant of approximately 25% of teachers' salaries with hardly any strings attached as to the use of these funds shows the determination to change from a detailed centrally prescribed system to one with increased opportunities for local adaptation of the compulsory school to the special needs of that community.

Item: The municipal school authorities try as far as possible to keep in touch with students who neither continue in upper secondary education nor obtain employment. Beginning with the academic year 1976/77 such "outreach activity" has been enjoined upon the municipalities; i.e., they are required to follow up the students for at least two years after they leave comprehensive school. And through collaboration between upper and secondary schools and municipal programs of adult education, more diverse opportunities for continued education will be opened up for young persons who prefer to take shorter or part-time courses.

Conclusions

While it is difficult to pinpoint, with any degree of certainty, the aspects of Scandinavian human service delivery systems that have the most impact on the delivery of services to troubled children and families, there are some intriguing areas of difference between Scandinavian and American society.

Society's Child-Centeredness

Even a casual visitor to Scandinavia may be struck by the child-centered aspects of everyday life. In Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, it is not at all usual (in fact it may be quite "normal") to find children's play-tables and changing/feeding rooms in perfectly ordinary cafeterias and restaurant. Since we traveled with our two young children, I was able to experience first-hand, the benefits of such arrangements for both youngsters and parents.

Playgroupds in Scandinavia are also exceptional. We were particularly impressed by the many indoor playgrounds, especially those found in Sweden (a good example may be seen at the Folkets park in Malmö). Here, protected from the elements and supervised by a staff of young adults, children may play on the creative playground equipment, create plays (and even dress up in the costumes available) and act them out on the mini-stage, participate in a variety of arts and crafts projects, etc.

We were similarly impressed when we happened upon a small outdoor play area in the very center of downtown Stokholm into which adults were not allowed to enter. Parents simply brought their youngsters to the gate, gave their names to the young man or woman in charge, stipulated how long they'd be gone, and then went off to do their shopping or errands, knowing their children were in good hands (and likely much happier than if they'd been forced to go along on the shopping trip).

It seems very likely that these "breaks" provided for parents and youngsters may be critical for the prevention of family distress. Parenting is a difficult, sometimes frustrating and certainly often-exhausting responsibility. The provision of services such as those listed above responds to parents' needs for brief "time-outs" from child-care responsibility as well as to children's needs to be seen and treated as valued members of society.

Single Contact Person

One finding that relates directly to the ecological perspective has to do with the accessibility of service. In many Scandinavian programs, it is possible (indeed nearly mandatory in some cases) for clients to work with a single "system" contact person, through whom the resolution of a variety of needs might be facilitated. For example, in Denmark's National Guidance Program, clients were seen immediately in most cases and then, when necessary, introduced to a family advisor based on the client's home neighborhood.

The advantages of such a format for the coordination of efforts have proven to be immense. The child and/or family can develop a relationship with a single source; a person both interested in all the aspects of their present difficulties and also able to seek out and help clients secure appropriate services. The Liaison Teacher, developed in project Re-Ed and the BRIDGE Program's Family Advocate model (both described earlier) are similar systems-based single contact person models that have demonstrated their effectiveness.

Actual Preventive Focus

In general, the Scandinavian countries seem to be more actively (and perhaps a bit less theoretically) involved in preventive activities. The wide-spread existence of day-care centers in Sweden, the strong and active sports centers of Norway, Danish efforts on behalf of the International Year of the Child all present specific activities performed in the name of prevention of emotional distress.

While similar kinds of things do occur in the U.S., we are just now beginning to develop the concerted national push for preventive programs that already pervades much of the Scandinavian efforts.

Systems-Oriented Resource Teacher

An increasingly important staff role for the provision of educational services to disturbed children is that of the Resource Teacher. The Resource Teacher can provide direct services to children, both individually and in groups of various sizes, and also may provide assistance to the other adults who work with children with special needs. Further, Resource Teachers often occupy central positions in schools, with lots of opportunities for interactions with children, teachers, administrators, and community members.

If viewed from an ecological perspective, the role of resource teacher carries great potential both for delivering appropriate direct services to disturbed children and for effecting necessary system changes through a variety of more indirect service functions (consultation, inservice education, working with families, etc.). Such a viewpoint is based on the belief that a good resource teacher is a problem-solver, skillful at helping both children and adults.

Figure 1, Roles of the Systems-Oriented Teacher graphically depicts the range of potential activities that may fall into the Resource Teacher's domain. While the constraints of time may make it unlikely that most resource teachers will be able to perform productively in all of these areas, it is essential for each Resource Teacher to define at least part of the role in terms of the Indirect, Preventive, and Linking Services in addition to Direct Service responsibilities.

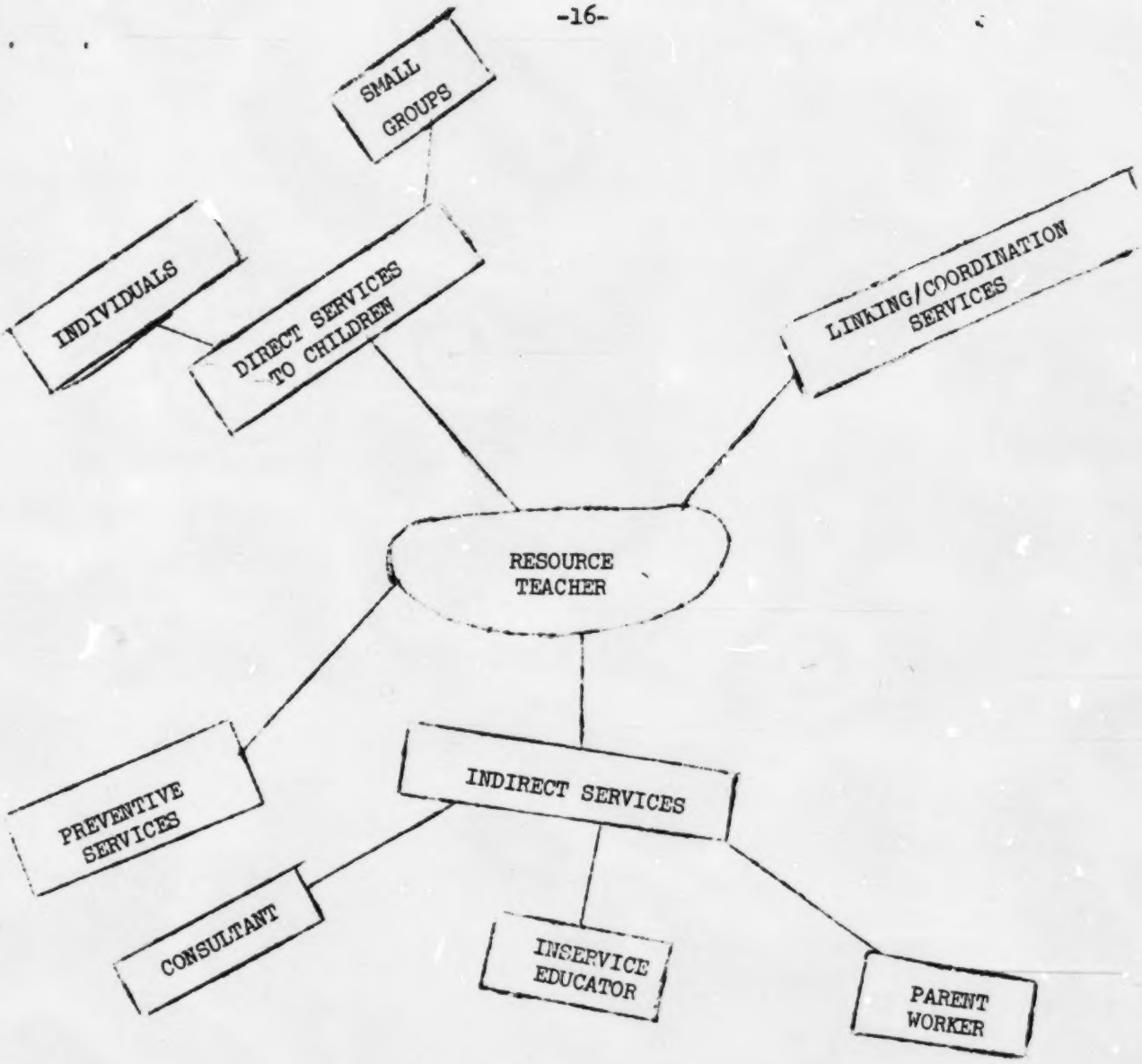

Figure 1: Roles of the Systems-Oriented Resource Teacher

Unfortunately, the often overwhelming need for service and the frustration produced in classroom teachers, administrators, and special educators who deal with disturbed children, have often combined to create a "clinical press" that strives to find solutions to the complicated problems of troubled youngsters by offering more and more direct services. Frequently, this turns out to be a self-defeating process for a number of reasons that are outlined below.

1) The over-emphasis on direct service to the exclusion of more ecological systems - focused roles can be short-sighted, i.e., more services to children might be provided today, but there's little evidence to indicate that children served in this limited way will be much better off tomorrow.

2) Equally important is the evidence that indicates there will never be enough trained personnel to meet the needs of the number of disturbed youngsters in our society. In other words, no matter how much direct service is provided to troubled children by resource teachers, there will always be more youngsters waiting in line for their opportunity.

3) A direct-service only model makes it impossible for resource personnel to become involved in what may turn out to be the most critical professional activity related to emotional disturbance in yonngsters: Prevention. This is especially frustrating because of the critical position of resource teachers at the interface of so many of the systems that impinge on the lives of disturbed children.

4) It must also be recognized that the problems enumerated above are magnified by the ineffectiveness of our typical direct-services only approach. In fact, the provision of effective service to troubled children is a very difficult enterprise that hardly guarahtees success. As more and more seriously impaired youngsters move into public school programs, we can only expect the task to become even more difficult.

5) Consider the following quote [from Wiederholt, J.L., Hammill, D.D., and Brown, V. The Resource Teacher Allyn & Bacon (1978)] which re-emphasizes much of the above:

"The emphasis that we give to the consulting role in the resource program model is long overdue in special education. Most teacher-training institutions have been slow to include such skills among their competencies; until the advent of the resource programs, public schools had no practical instructionally oriented arrangement that lent itself conveniently to providing consulting services to teachers. In any event, the schools in which the resource teachers are permitted to perform only two duties (to access and to remediate children's problems) are overlooking a profitable avenue for improving the education of both students and teachers. In fact, in selecting resource teachers, one primary consideration might be their ability to implement tactfully the consult aspects of the resource program." (p. 32-22).

6) The direct-service only model increases the likelihood that resource teachers will fall into the "<u>expert trap</u>" and the corresponding expectations to be able to provide magical cures to very difficult problems. While not diminishing the need for expert services, an ecological perspective to resource teaching emphasizes the importance to coordination and linking functions in the effective implementation of programs for troubled children.

7) An ecological model of service delivery is also more in keeping with the "<u>least restrictive setting</u>" philosophy. Such a perspective focuses on the whole child in the context of the systems in which he/she lives; in-school, and out, strengths as well as weaknesses, affective as well as cognitive domains, prevention before the fact in addition to treatment later on, coordinated with instead of separate from Regular Education, comprehensive assessment rather than narrow diagnosis, etc.

8) The push toward mainstreaming really demands that a coordination function become a central aspect of the Resource Teacher role. As Meisegier (1975) has stated:

"If our expectation is that 1-hour daily sessions in the resource rooms will magically or pervasively eliminate children's learning problems without concomitant efforts to teach children in a healthy learning environment the other four hours of each day, we are surely going to be disappointed. The process must be a cooperative effort between regular, alternative and special education to be called a mainstreaming effort."

9) The systems orientation necessitates the consideration of a number of indirect service functions for resource teachers who work with disturbed children. While some of those functions are yet to be clearly identified, others are well-known to professionals working in this area.

One role is that of consultant. Consider the following recommendation from Reynolds (A Common Body of Practise for Teachers: The Challenge of Public Law 94:142 to Teacher Preparation, 1979):

"It is essential now that all teachers have opportunities to master the knowledge and practises involved in effective consultation and other forms of professional communication. Every teacher should have instruction and practicum experience leading to assured capability in these areas as part of preservice preparation." (p. 14)

With reference to resource teachers for troubled children, Morse has stated:

"They need a lot more training in consultation and working with both teachers and systems to figure out how they can change some of these fundamental elements that cause or accelerate problems." (p. 163)

10) Another indirect service function for teachers who deal with disturbed children focuses on developing relationships with families. This is especially important for teachers who work with disturbed youngsters as any review and/or program development efforts in this area will point to the necessity of working with families of troubled children. For example, Paroz, Siegenthaler, and Tatum (1977) have described the importance of providing a variety of activities for parents as well as inservice education for teachers as part of a middle-school resource program.

Many professionals believe that this is a critical area for all teachers, too often neglected beaause of the over-emphasis on providing services only to the child in isolation. Again, consider the following quote from Reynolds (1979):

"All teachers should have skills and sensitivity for dealing with parents and siblings of handicapped students; they should have had opportunities to practise skills in this area as part of their practicums in teacher preparation. (p. 15)

The Program at Syracuse

The Systems Oriented Resource Teacher Training program is one aspect of the Masters Degree Program in the education of emotionally disturbed children in the Division of Special Education and Rehabilitation at Syracuse University and is based on the point of view described below.

The Total School Philosophy, graphically depicted in Figure 2, represented program participants' vision of a model for public schools as the locus of comprehensive and coordinated services for all children. In addition, a "total school" could be conceptualized as a comprehensive educational resource for the children and adults of the community in which it was located. Based on an ecological viewpoint, the total school philosophy assumes that children live and learn within the context of their own environments. This kind of a systems orientation necessitates the development of educational programs that focus on the important elements of a child's system as well as on the child. There are two major objectives underlying the total school philosophy: the provision of comprehensive, coordinated children's services, and the prevention of emotional disturbances in children.

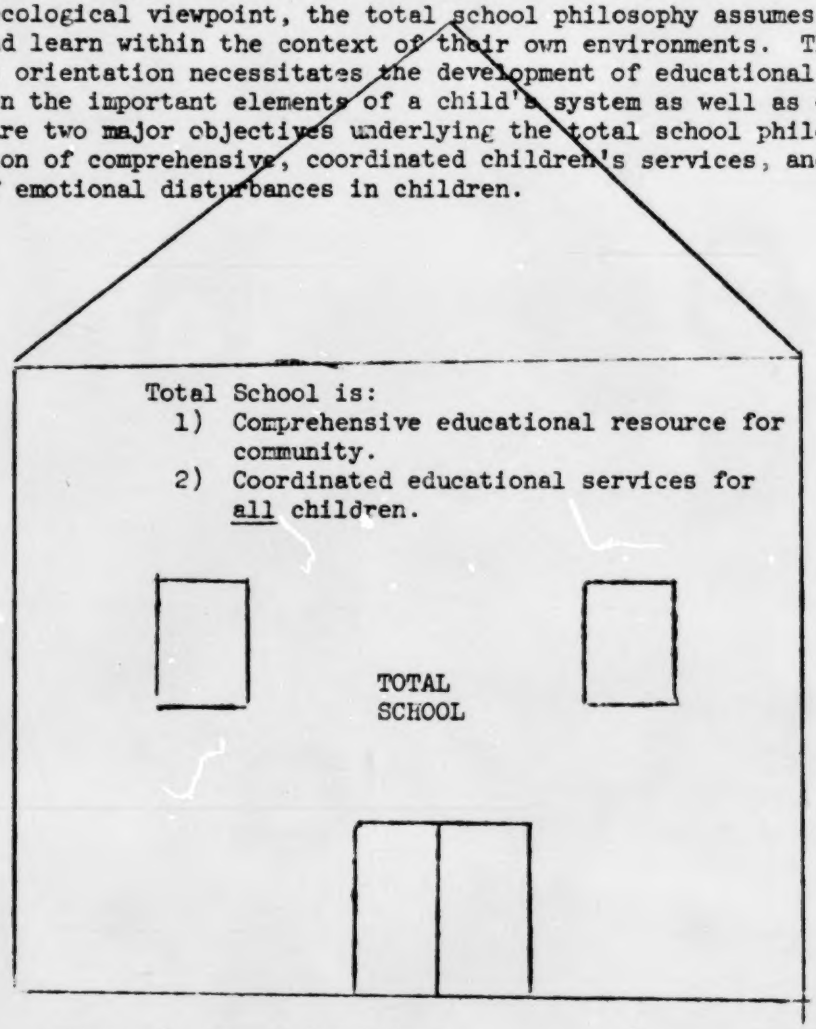

Figure 2: The Total School

Total School assumes:

1) Children live and learn in context of own environments.
2) Parents, siblings, neighborhood peer groups, church, school, playground, etc., are all potential elements of each child's world.
3) Each element has impact on child, and through child on each other.
4) Youngster's difficulty in one part of his/her system (i.e. home) can have serious repercussion in another part (i.e., school).

Total School objectives:

1) To focus on important elements of child's system as well as on child.
2) For teachers to see themselves as problem-solvers who work together with children to develop solutions to disturbing classroom situations.
3) To provide eppropriate educational programs for all children, including those with special needs, in least restrictive setting possible.
4) A committment to preventing emotional disturbances through efforts to better understand and more actively accept a wider range of individual differences in children.

The Systems Oriented Resource Teacher (SORT) Training Program

One especially important staff role in a Total School is that of the Resource Teacher. As described above, the Resource Teacher can provide direct services to children, both individually and in groups of various sizes, and also may serve in a variety of indirect service roles - providing assistance to the other adults who work with children with special needs. Thus, in a given school, the Resource Teacher interacts with children, classroom teachers, specialists, administrators and members of the surrounding community and can become a critical link in the planning and implementation of successful educational programs.

Program planning for a behaviorally disordered child in any educational setting requires an understanding of the variety of elements within each youngster's system; their relationships to each other, and their effects on the child's functioning. The role of resource teacher offers great potential for developing such understanding and for effecting necessary changes in public school service delivery models.

A good resource teacher can effect planned change regardless of presenting problem or nature of client system. This requires the ability to assume a variety of roles and to engage in innovative direct and indirect service programs and activities. Specifically, Systems-Oriented Resource Teachers are prepared to function in a variety of direct and indirect service roles. The resource teacher delivering direct services to children assumes the role of teacher-counselor. In the realm of indirect service, the resource teacher might assist colleagues by assuming roles such as; consultant, inservice educator, community educator, parent worker, coordinator, etc.

An application of the systems approach to the provision of service to a seriously troubled child may be seen in the "Profile System" described in Table 1. This plan, developed by an elements school resource teacher for a student identified as having severe behavior disorders, demonstrates the comprehensive nature of the systems orientation.

Table 1: Ecological Profile of a Behaviorally-Disordered Elementary School Student

Introduction:

During the past week I have been working both in and out of the classroom with G. Through interaction and observation and through discussions and input received from his classroom teacher and other interested parties I have attempted to draw up a list of G.'s strengths and weaknesses and a list of strategies which may be of use in planning for G. here at (school). It is my desire to be in a supportive role of teachers and specialists in their dealings with G. and I am willing to spend whatever time is necessary to fulfill that need.

I. Assets

1. Strong in Academic areas; Math, reading. Enjoys active learning experiences.
2. Enjoys helping others.
3. Responds well to positive reinforcers.
4. Would appear to respond best in situations where limits are well defined and understood.
5. Appears to grasp ideas of consequences and fair play.

Liabilities

1. Lack of self control in classroom situations (passive learning situations).
2. Constantly running out into halls and disturbing other classrooms.
3. Non-responsible when discussing his own actions.
4. Lack of response to certain adult controls.
5. Easily bored and distracted in the classroom.
6. In situations where there is already a high degree of peer activity, G.'s self control weakens and he will usually add to the chaos.

II. Points of Discordance: when does inappropriate behavior occur.

1. In classroom situations (most notably in the afternoon).
2. Lunchtimes.
3. At times when he receives a high degree of peer support.

III. Reactions to certain techniques.

1. Seems to respond well to "immediate positive reinforcers" but the power of the reinforcer seems to decrease as the length of time increases.
2. Reprimands - a signaling out of his behavior at point of occurance seems to increase acting out behavior. However, he understands the concepts of consequences when presented at a later time.

3. Ignoring - Has a major effect on his behavior especially in the instances of his running out "come and get me" game. Also his desire to run out and bother other classrooms decreases markedly when he doesn't receive peer support or attention.

4. Acting out behaviors appear to decrease in situations where activities focus on G.'s strengths.

IV. Needs

1. A structured school day in which the chances for success experiences are increased and punitive responses are decreased.

2. A structured school day in which the demands and expectations of others in a given situation match the strengths and skills G. already has.

3. A consistent school-wide approach to G.'s behavior.

V. Methods

1. Structure the school day so as to provide for break points.
Example: G. May spend forty-five minutes in the classroom and then receive a fifteen minute break to go help the librarian, nurse, or myself.

2. A big brother or other helping agent to assist in getting G. through lunchtime.

3. When behavior falters it would be the responsibility of <u>one</u> person to deal with G. (In this way the attraction of his "come and get me" games would be reduced and responses to his behavior would become more consistent.)

4. Provide for more active learning experiences to complement his regular reading and math instructional periods.

5. All these methods could be worked into a contractual type agreement between G. and the people who deal with him, with all parties participating actively. (In this way there would be a clear spelling out of limits and consequences).

6. A supportive program for G.'s home life so that G.'s life will have a consistent bridge between school and family. This may be done through the program into which G. has recently been accepted.

VI. Evaluations

1. Provide time at the end of the morning and afternoon sessions for G. to go over his own behavior.

2. Provide for periodic meetings between all those working with G. The purpose of these meetings would be to evaluated progress and maintain consistency between all those involved.

Over the past week I have received a great deal of input on G. from the people who work most directly with him. Among the suggestions I received were a cooling-off center within the classroom, a reward system whereby if G. would get a certain amount of points by the end of the week he could go on some sort of field trip, a card sent home to G.'s family every day to reward good behavior, and numerous other ideas. The most urgent need expressed to me was the need for everyone to work together in a consistent manner in planning for G. It was the purpose of this writing to tie together various ideas and to present possibilities for implementing those ideas in a consistent program that would be most beneficial to G.

Results (completed at a later date):

At the time this profile was developed (November, 1975), G. was in the verge of being removed from public school and institutionalized as was the case with his older siblings. At the current time (May, 1980), G. is performing satisfactorily in a regular junior high school program. At least some of the results must be attributed to the process begun by the development of this profile.

Summary and Conclusions

The October 1979 issue of the Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders (CCBD) Newsletter contained portions of a response from the Bureau of Education for Handicapped Children to CCBD concerns about support for the education of emotionally disturbed children. The following is a direct quotation from the BEH response.

"In order for an emotionally disturbed child to receive a free appropriate education a number of service providers are going to have to work collaboratively together. Among these service providers are education, mental health, vocational rehabilitation and social services. This would probably necessitate a number of personnel preparation models on both an inservice and preservice basis which would involve these service providers. Within education this would mean regular education teachers, administrators, and state department personnel." (p. 2)

It would seem clear that efforts to coordinate the work of service providers from a variety of disciplines can be optimized through the use of an ecological or systems orientation. As described above, such a model puts special emphasis on viewing each child in the context of a small social system (including the variety of service providers typically involved with disturbed children and families), and on the coordination of the efforts of the variety of persons involved.

The role of Resource Teacher has been identified as a critical position in the education of troubled children in today's schools. A recent mini-survey (Apter, 1978, unpublished) of 21 Resource Teachers in the Syracuse, New York area indicated that most of the students involved in those resource programs were labeled emotionally disturbed and nearly all of them were perceived by their teachers as having behavior (sometimes in addition to academic) problems.

The need for more indirect services including consultation with colleagues work with families, coordination of efforts, etc. has been detailed above as both an especially critical element of programs that demonstrate success with disturbed children and also as an essential element of the ecological or systems approach. The teachers involved in the mini-survey also expressed the need in this area; 76% of them emphasized their desire to incorporate more indirect service into their resource teacher role. Evans (1980) reached similar conclusions; resource teachers, classroom teachers, and principals in her study agreed that resource teachers could productively double the amount of time they spent doing consultation.

Finally, Wixson (1980) found that 30% of those pupils receiving direct service from the resource teacher were able to return to regular classrooms without additional help. When students received indirect services (essentially consisting of resource teacher consultation and classroom teacher implementation), 57% returned to full and unaided classroom participation.

In an interview (Exceptional Children, November, 1977) in which he discussed both the move to an ecological point of view in work with disturbed children and the role of the resource or helping teacher, Bill Morse has said:

"We now know that survival depends upon the ecological conditions under which people work, the expectations that are set, the kind of teaming that goes in, and the system's support efforts." (p. 163)

We have reviewed considerable evidence documenting the critical importance of what we have been calling indirect services; ways to improve the situations of seriously emotionally disturbed children that go beyond the provision of service directly to those youngsters. We have also discussed the increasingly critical position of resource teachers for children identified as having special emotional and behavioral needs. Unless we can act quickly to bring an ecological systems orientation to the work of resource personnel, we may well run the risk of re-creating the same kind of narrow, segregated, direct-service only model that has failed so many special educators in the past.

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